

Video and Conversation Analysis in Classroom Ethnography

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This presentation analyzes how high school students working together on a short film script navigate new and complex collaborative spaces such as a shared Google document. The study builds on Goodwin's (1994) discussion of "professional vision" to describe the implications of teaching students how to work on authentic projects. It also uses Goffman's (1981) notion of participation frameworks to describe how different individuals in the classroom become relevant to the collaboration based on their proximity to the focus of attention.

Ethnographic fieldnotes and video from two cameras were used to capture the classroom interaction. The students' conversations were transcribed using conversation analysis, which was able to reveal how students take up and modify their joint work through spoken language and posture.

The video-recorded data and conversation transcripts give us rich data to describe how students collaborated with each other through this computer-mediated environment. We can look at the implications of body language to describe the implications of their collaborative organization based on their bodily orientation. For example, students who both face the screen and look at their documents demonstrate a more "flat" hierarchy.

The data also shows us the shifting role of the teacher, who is unfamiliar with the new technology and project work and has to defer expertise to her students. This paper shows a particularly insightful moment when the teacher, who has been decentered from an authoritative role to a facilitating role, still slips back into that authoritative position. More interestingly, this switch between the two roles can be demonstrated by how the teacher orients herself to the students and how the students take her up on her advice. This incident, captured from multiple camera angles, shows how video data in ethnographic fieldwork can be a rich resource in identifying crucial moments of student-teacher interaction.